State of New Hampshire

Broadband Contract Program and Broadband Matching Grant Initiative

Capital Projects Fund

2024 Performance Report

Published July 31, 2024

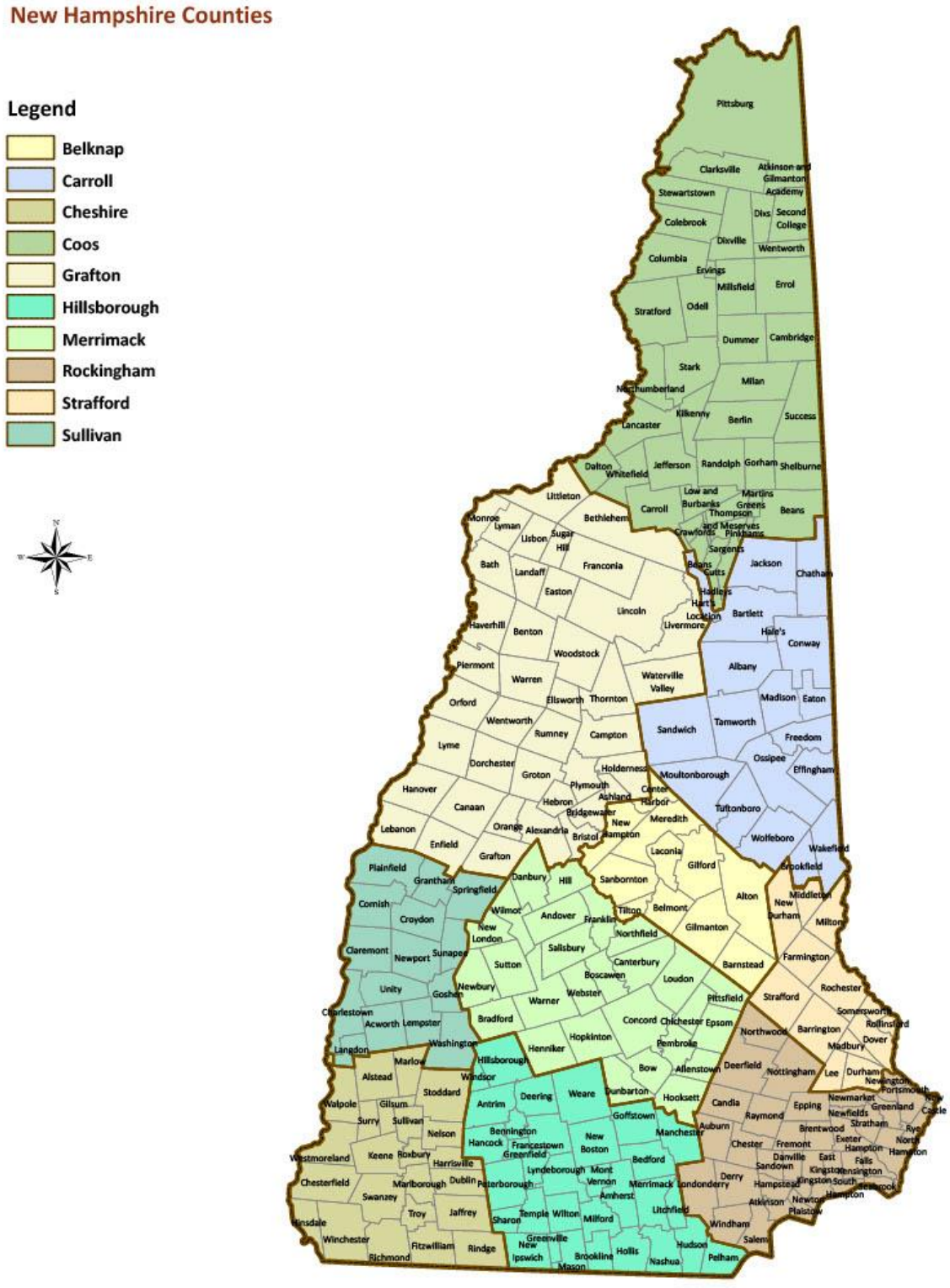

Figure 1. New Hampshire Counties. Source: NH Dept. of Administrative Services

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General Overview

Program Information

Approved Program Plan number: CPF_GP-000124
Program start date: September 22, 2022
Program end date: December 31, 2026
Actual CPF funds allocated to Broadband Contract Program: $90,000,000
Total CPF funds allocated to the State of New Hampshire: $122,000,000

Executive Summary

The State of Broadband

As the State of New Hampshire has continued to recover and grow after the COVID-19 pandemic, the necessity of digital connectivity has been continuously reinforced. In addition to rapid technological advancement and the onset of services like telehealth and virtual learning prior to the pandemic, the COVID-19 health and economic crisis shed light on the critical nature of reliable high-speed broadband access to facilitate work, education, healthcare, and the ability to socialize. Further development and build out of the necessary infrastructure became paramount for those in unserved or underserved locations with limited or no access to connection. The northern regions of New Hampshire have a smaller percent of served locations, shown in *Figure 2*, which highlights the need to build out to the unserved or underserved locations.

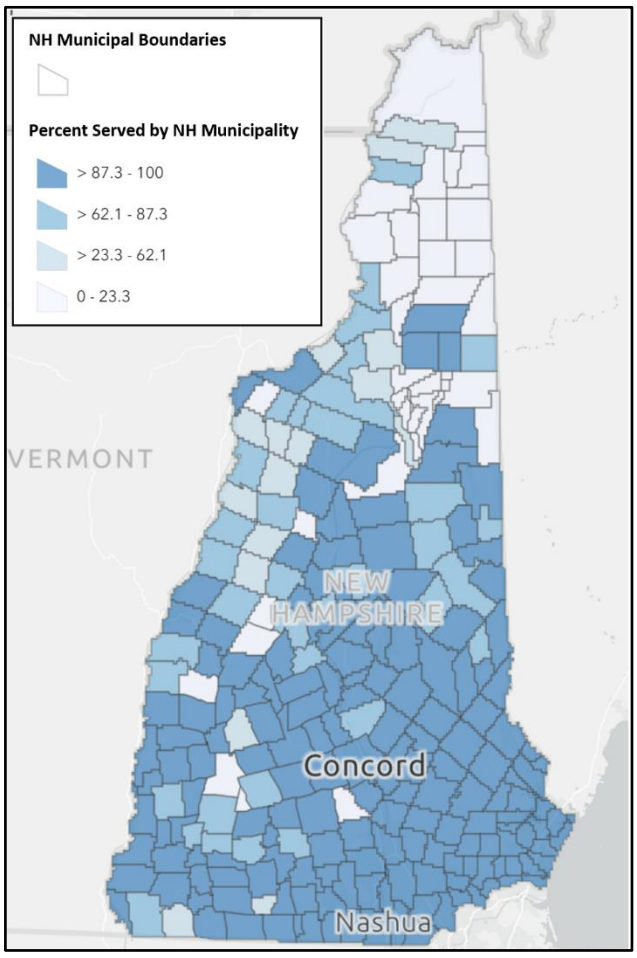

Figure 2. Served Households (≥100/≥20 Mbps). Source: UNH Mapping Initiative

In response to the surge in demand for adequate access to suitable internet speeds, New Hampshire has leveraged the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund (CPF) to support broadband infrastructure development and deployment. New Hampshire was allocated $122 million in ARPA CPF funding, which has been used to fund reliable and affordable broadband infrastructure. CPF funding addresses challenges resulting from the global pandemic, especially in rural America, tribal communities, and low-

income to moderate-income communities, helping to ensure that all communities have access to high-quality modern infrastructure needed to support critical services such as broadband.[1]

The State's Goal for Broadband
"In order to help Granite Staters more broadly participate in the modern digital economy, and for the state to be better positioned for investment by private industry, BEA is aggressively pursuing its goal of 100% access to high-speed internet statewide, and the programs facilitated by the agency's Office of Broadband Initiatives help provide the resources necessary to put the State's broadband access goal within reach."[2] - Chase Hagaman, Director of the Division of Economic Development at BEA

Broadband Contract Program

New Hampshire received approval from the U.S. Department of Treasury ("Treasury") for the Broadband Contract Plan in September of 2022. The program, designed to incentivize internet service providers (ISPs) to bring service to unserved (<25/3 Mbps) and underserved (<100/20 Mbps) addresses in the State, prioritizes providing the unserved areas with high-speed symmetrical (100/100 Mbps) broadband. The program focuses on rural development to improve digital equity, accessibility, and reliability as physical geography and lack of density may complicate construction and build out of this critical network. Under this program, which has received $90 million in CPF allocation, New Hampshire will connect 48,016 homes, community anchor institutions, and businesses to high-speed internet.

BEA awarded a total of $90 million to two contracts under the Broadband Contract Program to the New Hampshire Electric Co-op (NHEC) and Consolidated Communications (CCI) through a competitive bid process. NHEC was awarded $50 million to serve 23,259 unserved and underserved addresses. CCI was awarded $40 million to serve 24,757 unserved and

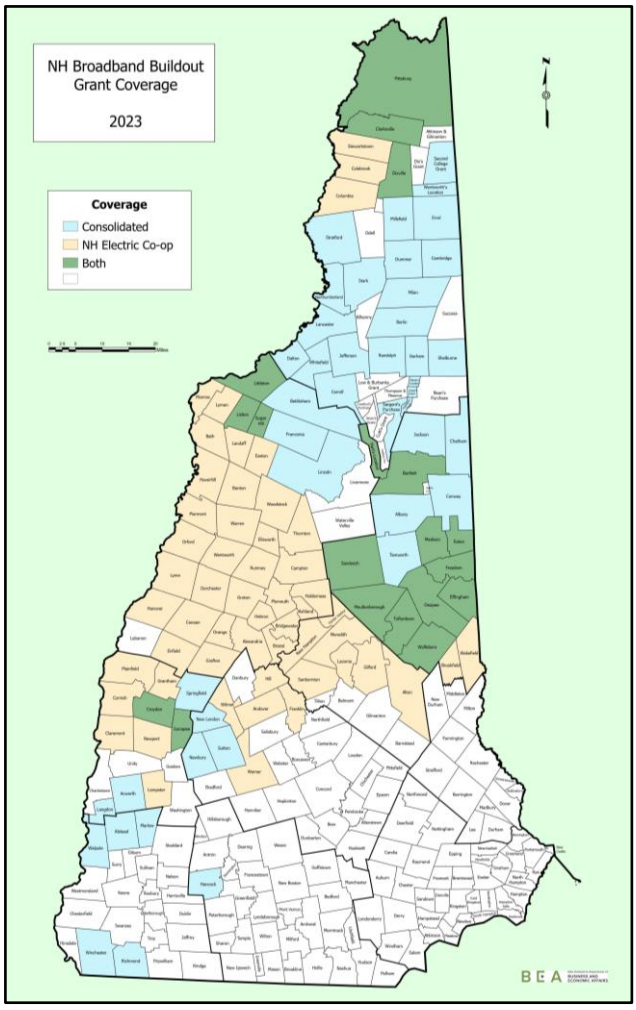

Figure 3. NH Broadband Contract Program Planned Buildout Coverage. Source: BEA

[1] New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services. "New Hampshire Marks the End of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency." [Press Release]. 11 May, 2023, https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/news-and-media/new-hampshire-marks-end-covid-19-public-health-emergency.

[2] Briand, Paul. "Q&A Interview with Chase Hagaman." New Hampshire Business Review, 30 Nov. 2023, https://www.nhbr.com/qa-interview-with-chase-hagaman/.

underserved addresses. The municipalities that are being built out to by NHEC and CCI through the Broadband Contract program are shown in *Figure 3.*

With the Broadband Contract Program, the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA) is working to provide unserved and underserved locations with broadband infrastructure that reliably delivers internet speeds that meet or exceed 100/100 Mbps download/upload speeds. Per the Broadband Contract Program Plan, ISPs were required to provide at least one low-cost option offered at speeds that are sufficient for households with multiple users to simultaneously telework and engage in remote learning.[3]

Both contractors have made significant progress in 2024. NHEC has completed construction to over 42% of the addresses in their contract, as of June 1, 2024. CCI launched construction activities at the beginning of 2024 and has completed construction to over 21% of the addresses in their contract, as of June 1, 2024. NHEC and CCI both achieved substantial progress in build-out, despite a variety of permitting and weather-related challenges that occurred in 2024. One challenge included the ice and snowstorm on March 24th that damaged infrastructure and left more than 200,000 households throughout New Hampshire and Maine without service.[4]

Broadband Matching Grant Initiative

In addition to the Broadband Contract program, the State of New Hampshire was approved to invest $26 million of CPF funding for the Broadband Matching Grant Initiative (BMGI). BMGI is a competitive grant program designed to fund infrastructure projects to bring high-speed internet to areas currently lacking service. BMGI will provide a state match of up to 75% of eligible project costs to ISPs or municipalities, which is designed to alleviate the fiscal impact of community-driven broadband investment for both ISPs and municipalities and reduce reliance on bonding.

Over the past year, BEA has selected applicants to receive funding and is in the process of gaining final State approval of those awards. BEA has evaluated applications, conducted a remedy process, and has recently finished the challenge process. BMGI is set to fund twelve applications with three different ISPs to provide service to 3,087 unserved or underserved addresses. More information on BMGI can be found in the last section of this Annual Performance Report.

[3] State of New Hampshire Capital Projects Fund Program Plan, *Broadband Contract*

[4] Moss, Sebastian. “Internet and power outages in Maine and New Hampshire after major winter snowstorm.” Data Center Dynamics, 24 Mar. 2024, https://www.datacenterdynamics.com/en/news/internet-and-power-outages-in-maine-and-new-hampshire-amid-major-snowstorm/.

Uses of Funds

New Hampshire has a strong record of using federal funds to help deliver effective broadband investment and impact. Prior to CPF, the State invested $13 million from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act into broadband expansion, clearly demonstrating a prioritization of broadband infrastructure both during and beyond COVID-19, providing residents and businesses with confidence in the continuation of broadband services.[5]

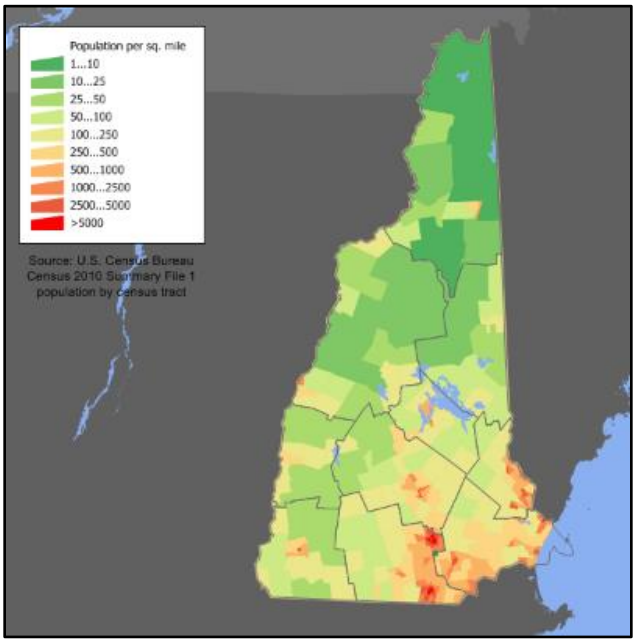

Figure 4. NH Population Density. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The CARES Act set the State up for success with CPF, as BEA was able to use the key lessons learned from this funding stream to best target the addresses that have a need for expanded broadband access. After the CARES Act, many individuals still did not have access to internet service or experienced speeds so slow that they were unable to effectively learn, work, or participate in telehealth activities from home.[6] These lessons learned helped New Hampshire develop a plan on how best to use its CPF allocation to reach even more unserved and underserved addresses as the State invested in efforts to bridge the digital divide.

New Hampshire's CPF programs are specifically designed to incentivize ISPs to bring service to hard-to-reach areas where investment may otherwise not be viable. BEA has a keen awareness of the geography and demography that impacts how broadband infrastructure is deployed. Residents of New Hampshire live in areas with unique geography and weather considerations and challenging terrain that complicate infrastructure construction. In addition, 47% of the State's population live in rural communities, where the low population density leads to increased distance between addresses, which in turn increases the cost per passing individual households.[7] The northern and western regions in New Hampshire are less densely populated, shown in *Figure 4*, which cause the cost of buildout to be higher for ISPs than in more densely populated areas. Other factors, like the lower median incomes and higher median ages of rural areas, contribute significantly to the value proposition of building out broadband to rural areas,

[5] New Hampshire Office of the Governor. "New Hampshire First State to Implement Broadband Expansion." [Press Release], 7 Jun. 2022, https://www.governor.nh.gov/news-and-media/new-hampshire-first-state-implement-broadband-expansion.
[6] State of New Hampshire Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery. "CARES Act Transparency: An overview of CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) related transparency resource." https://www.goferr.nh.gov/transparency/cares-act-transparency.
[7] Gong, Lily, Colby Humphrey, and Jake Varn. "How State Broadband Offices Are Using Initial Dollars from Capital Projects Fund." The Pew Charitable Trusts, 23 May 2023, https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2023/05/23/how-state-broadband-offices-are-using-initial-dollars-from-capital-projects-fund.

since location density, income, and age are all associated with low broadband adoption.[8] BEA has focused on providing a financial incentive to reach these communities, otherwise building out to these communities would be financially burdensome for ISPs.

Progress Spotlight: New Hampshire Broadband Impact

Impact Statement

The $90 million Broadband Contract Program is focused on the buildout of unserved and underserved locations. The inauguration of New Hampshire as the nation's first approved ARPA CPF broadband plan attests to the strength of the State's initiative to invest in ARPA goals.

Scope of Work

The Broadband Infrastructure Contract scope, valued at $90 million of the total $122 million ARPA CPF monies, serves 48,016 locations across New Hampshire. This equates to $1,874 in ARPA CPF funds per passing.

Progress Update

- **CCI:** Fiber construction is complete and splicing, and installations have begun in five (5) of the 23 project locations which include Alstead, Berlin, Errol, Gorham, and Moultonborough.
- **NHEC:** Active service has begun in five (5) of the 22 project locations, including the Fairgrounds service station, Rumney, Haverhill, and Lisbon, and Bridgewater.
- In total, CCI and NHEC have passed 15,010 addresses, as of June 1, 2024 with fiber that can provide 100/100 Mbps upload/download speeds.

Upcoming Priorities

- **CCI:** CCI has started installation, fiber construction, and/or splicing in fifteen (15) municipalities they are building in. CCI's priorities for the remainder of 2024 is to start engineering in the remaining eight municipalities.
- **NHEC:** NHEC is projected to complete at least five substations by the end of 2024, which means there will be active service at half of the project locations.

Projected Construction Completion

- **CCI:** Projected construction completion in Q3 2025.
- **NHEC:** Projected construction completion in Q3 2026.

[8] Wert, Kelly and Anna Read. "Broadband Access Still a Challenge in Rural Affordable Housing." The Pew Charitable Trusts, 8 Dec. 2022, https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2022/12/08/broadband-access-still-a-challenge-in-rural-affordable-housing#:~:text=Housing%20in%20rural%20areas%2C%20including,to%20subscribe%20to%20the%20service.

NHEC and CCI have both been hard at work making progress on their respective projects. As of June 1, 2024, NHEC has passed a total of 9,836 addresses – 42% of the planned 23,259 addresses to be served by the project. NHEC has fully activated service for their Fairgrounds, Rumney, Haverhill, Lisbon, and Bridgewater substations, with construction ongoing for the Thornton, Goose Pond, Meredith, Center Harbor, Moultonborough, and Corliss Hill substations.[9]

As of June 1, 2024, CCI has passed a total of 5,174 addresses – 21% of the planned 24,756 addresses to be served by the project. CCI has completed construction on their Alstead, Berlin, Errol, Gorham, and Moultonborough substations, and is making steady progress with continued make-ready engineering for the Hancock, Groveton, Milan, Madison, Sunapee, and Pittsburg wire centers.[10] In total, the two infrastructure contractors, NHEC and CCI, have passed 15,010 locations and there are 33,006 remaining to be served as of June 1, 2024. *Figure 5* shows the completed locations and remaining locations, highlighted in green and orange respectively, for both ISPs.

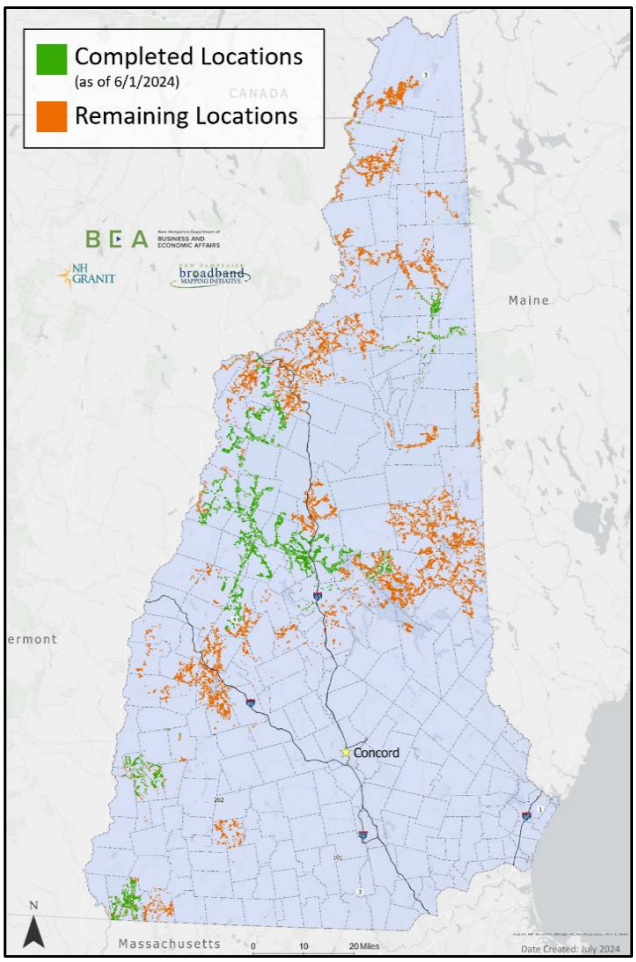

Figure 5. CPF Project Status on Completed Locations. Source: UNH Broadband Mapping Initiative

[9] NHEC Project Monitoring Form, Q1 2024
[10] CCI Project Monitoring Form, Q1 2024

Progress Spotlight: Customer Impact

Gaining access to high-speed internet can be lifechanging for Granite Staters. A family in Canaan who now subscribes to NHEC's fiber-optic service, said "we're so far out here in the woods, so it's something special to have New Hampshire broadband. We had two different providers before that just ran off of cell towers. That service was unpredictable and unreliable. We have found that this service is top-notch at this point."[11] Broadband also enables families to stay connected. As one homeowner in Grafton noted, "Our family lives locally and our grandkids visit. They love to use the internet for their games, and we didn't have good service. They'd try to download games, but it would take forever. One day, they came over and we said 'Guess what? We have super-fast broadband.' They were beaming with delight and so happy about it that they got their devices out and got connected."[12] Both statements, from the family in Canaan and the homeowner in Grafton, speak to the necessity of providing reliable broadband speeds statewide.

In addition to providing benefits to households, the Broadband Contract Program is also providing material benefits to New Hampshire businesses which were previously unserved or underserved businesses. As one business owner subscribed to NHEC's business services noted, "Our day-to-day operations have vastly improved with the fiber optic service. The broadband has been perfect, and the bandwidth will be able to accommodate additional equipment as our store continues to grow."[13] The benefits of high-speed internet are needed for small businesses to thrive in a modern economy. The owner of a restaurant in Plymouth, NH, remarks: "We use the internet for everything from ordering supplies to receiving orders and working with our delivery partner Door Dash, and our phone system," showing how crucial a reliable internet connection is for a modern business.[14]

[11] New Hampshire Electric Co-operative [@nh_electric_cooperative]. "Meet the Conrads – After struggling with unreliable internet service in rural Canaan, New Hampshire…" [Video]. Instagram, 20 Mar. 2024, https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4vqhT5MFkf/?igsh=MXd1cmt3ZnNqcWJ4ag==.

[12] New Hampshire Electric Co-operative [@nh_electric_cooperative]. "Betsy Wotton, a Grafton resident, shares how NH Broadband has completely transformed family gatherings…" [Video]. Instagram, 29 Mar. 2024, https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5GntFECM3z/?igsh=b2lsN29weWM3cm5z.

[13] NHEC Project Monitoring Form, Q1 2024

[14] New Hampshire Electric Co-operative [@nh_electric_cooperative]. @groovynoodleplym Goes NH Broadband! [Photograph]. Instagram, 8 May 2024. https://www.instagram.com/p/C6uaOGQLTXs/?igsh=d2xoN3k1NzRqNmoy.

Progress Spotlight: Winter Storm Challenges

Both NHEC and CCI have made significant progress towards project completion, despite facing challenges. In March 2024, a severe snow and ice storm in New England caused extensive damage to broadband infrastructure, leaving over 200,000 people without internet due to downed power and telecom lines. The storm caused significant damage to physical telecommunications infrastructure for internet service providers and put an unexpected strain on their resources. Contractors needed to shift resources to restore service to existing customers away from building out to Broadband Contract locations. Despite this, both providers were able to assess the impact on their progress and adjust the project phases of completion to remain on track by increasing construction over the summer months. Once NHEC restored service following one of the most damaging storms in NHEC's 85-year history, NHEC shared: "We appreciate the hard work of our crews who restored power to over 50,000 members. We couldn't have done it without the support of our members, support staff and external crews who came from far and wide to help us."[15] Inclement weather is always a consideration in New Hampshire, but the hard work and dedication to maintaining a labor supply by contractors allows ISPs to quickly resolve issues and restore service so continued progress can be made to serving more areas.

Progress Spotlight: Connecting Rural New Hampshire

One of BEA's top priorities for the Broadband Contract Program is to connect the most rural parts of the State. For these rural communities, current internet infrastructure falls distinctly short: some rural New Hampshire residents have to seek out internet connections in public places to receive adequate speeds if they are not yet available at their place of residence. According to Kathleen Kelley, a member of the Randolph Broadband Committee, thirty percent of students in Shelburne were using dial-up internet during the pandemic, which is not sufficient given the demands of virtual education.[16] Randolph is one of many communities to be served by the Broadband Contract Program under CCI's project, and many residents have voiced how excited they are for coming service. In the words of Sarah Davis, Vice President of Government Affairs at CCI, "We are so excited with the numerous towns we are working within mostly Carroll and Coos county, but others as well to expand broadband to people that are unserved and really provide future proof broadband service that as initially rolled out at by 2 gigs. Whether it's working from home, digitally contacting their doctor for telehealth even just watching Netflix and streaming videos, they will be able to do anything they need. They will have all the bandwidth they need."[17]

In order to ensure an effective and compliant use of funds, BEA has followed Treasury's reporting guidelines to track quantitative and qualitative metrics. BEA has implemented a series of contractor data request tools to ensure goals are met. Through these tools, BEA maintains ongoing oversight and

[15] New Hampshire Electric Co-operative [@nh_electric_cooperative]. "With service now restored following one of the most damaging storms in our 85-year history…" [Photo]. Instagram, 11 Apr. 2024, https://www.instagram.com/reel/C5oBGsjtner/?igsh=Y3BpYjN3MWRnNHp2.
[16] Merrill, Scott. "Connecting Rural NH." BusinessNH Magazine, 9 Jan. 2024, https://www.businessnhmagazine.com/article/connecting-rural-nh.
[17] Tracy, Paula. "$40M Contract Will Help 25,000 Rural Homes Get Broadband in N.H." InDepthNH. 22 Feb. 2023. https://indepthnh.org/2023/02/22/40m-contract-will-help-25000-rural-homes-get-broadband-in-n-h/.

visibility into the status of project milestones, project finances, financial management practices, and community engagement and participation. On a quarterly basis, the State provides project reporting materials to Treasury as requested and outlined in CPF guidance.

Both contractors, NHEC and CCI, have been working diligently to track project milestones and completed passings. NHEC and CCI are utilizing mapping technologies to monitor and record project locations, providing completed passings on a monthly basis. Each contractor regularly updates BEA on project progress through four different reporting tools including the quarterly project and expenditure (P&E) report, project monitoring form, monthly data request, and financial records request. These tools include comprehensive data on location coordinates, funds used, and the status of each project, providing a clear and organized overview of the project's development.

On a monthly basis, BEA receives project updates on three key metrics: number of locations where broadband deployment has been completed, cumulative take rate, and location data for all completed passings. Using these metrics, BEA can assess the progress each ISP is making, compare location data to project plans, and get insight into the number of households that are subscribing to the services provided. These updates also function as a way for ISPs to flag any issues they may be having and make a plan to mitigate encountered roadblocks. On a quarterly basis, BEA requires contractors to fill out the Project and Expenditure (P&E) tool and the Project Monitoring Form (PMF). The P&E is required by Treasury and used for quarterly reporting, the PMF is a quarterly check-in off cycle of the P&E.

Additionally, BEA conducts a thorough analysis of contractors' project finances every quarter. BEA requests all financial records made with CPF monies and pulls a sample of transactions for further testing. For this testing, supporting documentation is requested to validate the amount of and purpose for each cost. This allows BEA insight into how ISPs are spending the funds to prevent any fraud, waste, or abuse.

Effective Management of Funds

Promoting Equitable Outcomes and Addressing Critical Needs

The State places a priority on providing equitable services and outcomes by ensuring reliable service is provided to all Granite Staters. These CPF funds for the Broadband Contract Program and BMGI will ensure that NHEC and CCI, and the awarded ISPs for BMGI, invest in the infrastructure needed to bring broadband to the State's hard to reach unserved and underserved communities, where households have struggled to engage in a world made significantly more digital. BEA previously required both NHEC and CCI to participate in the Federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a program that offered discounted internet service to households with income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. The recent sunsetting of ACP has caused both providers to reevaluate how to provide low-cost solutions for residents.[18] NHEC is currently in the process of becoming Lifeline certified and CCI

[18] Taglang, Kevin. "An Update on Affordable Connectivity Program Enrollment." Benton Institute for Broadband and Society, 5 Aug. 2022, https://www.benton.org/blog/update-affordable-connectivity-program-enrollment.

already participates in Lifeline. While the Lifeline discounts do help low-income households, the ACP provided a much more substantial subsidy for internet services.

Case Study: Broadband Affordability and the Sunsetting of the ACP

The Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) was previously relied on by thousands of New Hampshire households to afford internet. However, this program came to a swift end in April of 2024, ending assistance to these households, which made service affordable for them. While the ACP program has ended, BEA still prioritizes affordability as a major goal of the Broadband Contract Program. Even though the ACP has concluded, NHEC and CCI are still required to provide at least one low-cost option that allows for multiple users to telework and engage in remote learning at the same time. CCI is Lifeline certified, meaning low-income households can use Lifeline for a stipend for broadband service.[19] NHEC has subsidized programs for members unable to pay their utility bills through NHEC's Charitable Foundation, and is currently working towards Lifeline certification. In addition, NHEC holds bi-weekly meetings with the National Collaborative for Digital Equity to explore opportunities to extend broadband services for those least able to pay for them otherwise.[20]

BEA acknowledges that federal programs do not cover all of the needs of low-income Granite Staters. For this reason, the State rules require recipients to adhere to the objectives of equity by prioritizing digital development in rural areas, affordability on a cost-per-passing basis, and accessibility by focusing on encompassing as broad of a geographic impact as possible. NHEC and CCI report on community participation efforts, such as how the contractor is encouraging uptake to customers with new or improves access under the program. BEA considered whether broadband infrastructure would be long-standing, and evaluated whether networks would be affordable in the target market.

Labor

BEA's priority is to ensure the strong labor practices of NHEC and CCI align with New Hampshire's values and Treasury's standards. Over the course of the project, CCI plans to build 2,676 miles of fiber in New Hampshire, serving nearly 25,000 homes and businesses. Their strong workforce has also successfully maintained CCI's fiber network in New Hampshire since its inception. CCI will use this established network to build out broadband infrastructure to reach the locations it outlined when it received CPF funds. CCI has a Project Labor Agreement, and CCI's workforce will be more than sufficient to complete the project and to operate and maintain the network in the future.[21]

NHEC has engaged its major subcontractor, Conexon, to manage the construction and labor of the project, ensuring a sufficient supply of skilled labor. Since the last annual performance report in 2023,

[19] CCI CPF RFP Response
[20] NHEC CPF RFP Response
[21] CCI CPF RFP Response

the vendor has added installation positions to enhance the volume of installs and additional crews have been added to mainline construction and drop crews.

All labor on NHEC and CCI's CPF-funded projects is compensated above the national and regional prevailing wage.[22] [23] New Hampshire is a competitive environment for employers, and wages in New Hampshire typically match or exceed national averages and local prevailing wages for construction-related jobs.[24] As a result of the competitive labor market, many private construction firms offer full benefits, including health insurance, paid sick leave, paid vacation, and retirement contributions. Both CCI and NHEC prioritize local hires.

New Hampshire imposes licensure requirements, including education, certification, and experience requirements, for a broad range of professionals, including electricians, gas fitters, plumbers, heating equipment technicians, architects and landscape architects, asbestos and lead abatement professionals, elevator and lift mechanics, engineers, explosives workers, and well contractors and installers.[25] In the event of an infraction, the Office of Professional Licensure and Certificate provides a convenient online portal for reporting violations of licensure requirements.[26] These requirements help ensure a consistently high quality of labor and workplace safety for all projects employing workers in these fields.

New Hampshire is aware of supply chain and labor shortages caused by the influx in federal broadband funding that could potentially delay the investment in construction materials and fiber-optical cable. BEA and its contractors have mitigated this challenge by securing on-hand inventory, fair labor standards, and robust supply chain processes. Additionally, inclement weather and rough terrain are common risk factors in the northern regions of New Hampshire, regions that are the most rural and in need of broadband investment. To ensure the safety of crews on the ground, NHEC and CCI has adhered to strict processes that ensure the safety and wellbeing of all stakeholders. NHEC's Safety Department has met with the vendors that are completing the project and have held site visits to ensure that safety guidelines and protocols are followed. To ensure steady progress, NHEC will mitigate slower winter construction through an aggressive build pace in the weather-amenable summer and fall. CCI incorporates weather and season related considerations in their engineering and construction planning.

Community Engagement

Both BEA and its contractors procured to conduct Broadband Contract projects engage in community engagement efforts throughout the State of New Hampshire. BEA conducts "BEA Days" in various locations in regions across the State, with each office facilitating brief presentations to notify the community on progress towards their goals and impacts in various regions. For the Office of Broadband Initiatives, this included outlining the number of addresses in the community to be served by BEA programs, highlighting that broadband is swiftly being constructed.

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[22] CCI Project and Expenditure Report, Q1 2024
[23] NHEC Project and Expenditure Report, Q1 2024
[24] "Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2023." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 3 Apr. 2024, https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes472073.htm.
[25] New Hampshire Office of Professional Licensure and Certification. https://www.oplc.nh.gov/find-board.
[26] New Hampshire Office of Professional Licensure and Certification. https://www.oplc.nh.gov/report-non-compliance.

NHEC conducts community engagement events as a part of normal business through presentations, newsletters, and social media. NHEC has been engaging with town boards through presentations and engaging with community members through their newsletter, which features a broadband story each month.[27] Lastly, NHEC actively posts on social media about service offerings and features customer testimonials from active subscribers.

Similarly to NHEC, CCI is also active in the communities they build out to. CCI attends town select board meetings, presents during broadband meetings, and communicates regularly with town officials informing them about the grant status.[28] For each community it serves, CCI works with the town to plan a construction kickoff presentation, where town residents can discuss concerns or request additional information. CCI frequently sends out press releases to news outlets and seeks out local events to sponsor and participate in. In addition to direct community engagement efforts, CCI and NHEC both conduct digital ad campaigns targeted to communities they serve to build awareness around their services and availability.

NHEC and CCI both engage in efforts to alert Granite Staters to the new broadband services being made available to them. Both providers conduct physical door-hanger campaigns at addresses to be served both prior to and after construction efforts.

CCI outreach consists of an extensive mail and door-hanger campaign that starts 60 days before construction starts and runs 280 days after service is activated. The campaign includes multiple tactics such as direct mail, door hangers, door to door pre-order sales, email, text message, outbound calling, social media posts, and door to door sales. Outside of the marketing campaign, CCI also run mass media (TV, Radio, Print, Digital) in select markets, sends out press releases, and seek out local events to sponsor and participate in. CCI works with the town to plan for a construction kick-off presentation where the town residents can provide any relevant concerns or request information. CCI's media team will work with the towns to produce an article in the local paper or town newsletter that will provide residents with the current status of the project, what to expect, and how they can get more information. In addition to direct outreach, CCI also send letters to all town select boards and broadband committees informing them about the grant, CCI's intentions to build a fiber network for their town, and how residents can access a landing page that has additional information and an option to pre-order.

NHEC sends out postcards in each area or zone they are preparing to open at 90-day, 60-day and 30-day intervals to let members know fiber broadband is coming. For the month leading up to the area opening, NHEC implements an email campaign encouraging sign-ups. Once zones are live and service is available, NHEC then sends direct mail 30 and 60 days post-open to ensure all know service is available. As construction crews go through areas, NHEC uses a combination of yard signs and door hangers to let residents know service is available. In addition to having an extensive plan to notify residents, NHEC also prioritized community outreach by hiring a community-oriented marketing professional, a position that began in June 2024, to drive campaigns and conduct community outreach to increase interest and desire to subscribe to this service. In addition, NHEC is working on two campaigns with the National

[27] NHEC Project Monitoring Form, Q1 2024
[28] CCI Project Monitoring Form, Q1 2024

Collaborative for Digital Equity (NCDE). In one campaign, they are working with NCDE to engage prospective households and members to sign up for services, and in the other they are working to communicate with members and potential members regarding incentives and programs to assist customers in affording said services. Both ISPs disperse digital and physical materials providing guidance and education on their products and services.

New Hampshire's focus on serving rural areas has shown strong signs of success when it comes to bridging the challenges that come with serving a highly rural state. NHEC, for example, is not only building out to the most sparsely populated county, Coos, but is currently discussing economic development opportunities surrounding the availability of high-speed internet with the county. NHEC met with a representative from Coos County Economic Development about partnering to support economic development through the increase of broadband access in the region. For these rural areas, fully using the potential of a modern broadband system is crucial to achieving true digital equity, helping to bridge the rural and urban divide.

Civil Rights Compliance

BEA has strict regulatory and compliance protocols in place to ensure contractors meet legal requirements relating to nondiscrimination and nondiscriminatory use of Federal funds. By implementing a standardized New Hampshire P-37 contract form for all recipients of the ARPA CPF-funded Broadband Contract Program, BEA has communicated the contractual agreement that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Pub. L. 88-352), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, (Pub. L. 92-318, Pub. L. 93-568, and Pub. L. 94-482), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Pub. L. 93-112), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (Pub. L. 94-135), and Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Pub. L. 90-284) are adhered to. By signing this contractual agreement, contractors adhere to the strict policies and procedures set forth. In connection with the performance of broadband services, the contractors shall comply with all applicable statutes, laws, regulations, and orders of Federal, State, county or municipal authorities which impose any obligation or duty upon the contractor, including, but not limited to, civil rights and equal employment opportunity laws. During the term of this agreement, the contractors shall not discriminate against employees or applicants for employment because of race, color, religion, creed, age, sex, handicap, sexual orientation, or national 18 origin and will take affirmative action to prevent such discrimination. These measures taken by BEA assure compliance with all nondiscrimination Federal laws laid forth by the Treasury.

Broadband Matching Grant Initiative Program

Program Information

In addition to the Broadband Contract program, BEA is working to administer its other CPF-funded program, the Broadband Matching Grant Initiative (BMGI), which has selected applicants to receive funding and is in the process of gaining final State approval for those awards.

BMGI, established by RSA 12-O:61-63, makes an initial $25,962,843 million available to provide matching grants to internet service providers (ISPs) and municipalities to improve broadband availability

across the State.[29] BMGI is designed to fund broadband infrastructure projects delivering high-speed internet (>100/100 Mbps) to unserved (<25/3 Mbps) and underserved (<100/20 Mbps) locations. BMGI will provide a state match of up to 75% of eligible project costs, which is designed to alleviate the fiscal impact of community-driven broadband investment for both ISPs and municipalities and reduce reliance on bonding.

BEA evaluated applications for the BMGI program and preliminarily approved twelve applications from three different ISPs. The applications then went through the challenge process to determine location eligibility per RSA 12-O:62, II(b) and Bea 405. The Challenge Process allowed any party to challenge the eligibility of any location preliminarily deemed allowable for BMGI funding. A location could be challenged if it is already served with internet speeds above 100/20Mbps or there is already broadband infrastructure construction underway at the proposed BMGI location. The challenge phase lased from March 4, 2024 through April 3, 2024. At the conclusion of the challenge process, BMGI applicants were notified of the final total number of eligible project locations and the total number of BMGI funds they would receive to build out to those locations.

Currently, BEA is in the process of approving award agreements with the ISPs, which will then be officially approved by G&C. The State anticipates approving all awards in Q3 of 2024. The program is anticipated to officially start during the period covered by the 2025 Annual Performance Report. U.S. Treasury has confirmed that no waiver is needed for this performance report for the BMGI program since funds have not yet been distributed.

[29] State of New Hampshire, RSA I 12-O:61-63. Broadband Matching Grant Initiative. 2022. https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/I/12-O/12-O-61.htm

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